

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARIS 21699 01 OF 02 221816Z

44

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PLAB, FR

SUBJECT: CGT PRINTERS UNION STRIKES AGAIN

1. SUMMARY: CGT PRINTERS UNION STRUCK FOR SIXTH TIME THIS YEAR PREVENTING PUBLICATION OF NEWSPAPERS ON 21 AUGUST. PCF-CGT ARE SEEKING TO EXPLOIT THE AGITATION AROUND "PARISIEN LIBERE" IN HOPE OF PRESERVING CGT'S MONOPOLY CONTROL IN PRINTING BUSINESS. END SUMMARY.

2. FOR THE SIXTH TIME THIS YEAR FRANCE WAS WITHOUT (OR ALMOST) HER DAILY PRESS ON 21 AUGUST. AS IN ALL PREVIOUS OCCASIONS THE REASON FOR THIS BLACKOUT WAS A 24-HOUR STRIKE BY THE CGT PRINTERS UNION STEMMING FROM THE SIX-MONTH-OLD STRIKE AGAINST THE "PARISIEN LIBERE" IN THE VAIN HOPE OF PREVENTING APPLICATION OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY AND RELATED LOSS OF TRADITIONAL JOBS.

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PAGE 02 PARIS 21699 01 OF 02 221816Z

3. IRONICALLY THE STRIKE RESULTED IN THE "PARISIEN

LIBERE" BEING THE ONLY PAPER TO BE PRINTED AND SOLD IN PARIS AND OTHER AREAS THEREBY, IN EFFECT, ENHANCING THE PAPER'S POSITION AGAINST ALL ITS COMPETITORS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE "PARISIEN LIBERE" STRIKE. THE CGT, HOWEVER, HAS ARGUED THAT THE EDITORS OF ALL NEWSPAPERS HAVE BEEN GLEEFULLY FOLLOWING "PARISIEN LIBERE'S" SUCCESS IN MATCHING WITS WITH THE PRINTERS UNION AND THEREFORE ARE NOT INNOCENT VICTIMS OF THE PRESS STRIKES.

4. OF THE PROVINCIAL PRESS THE TWO PRINCIPAL LYON DAILIES DID NOT OBSERVE THE STRIKE BECAUSE THE MAJORITY OF THE PRINTERS BELONG TO INDEPENDENT AND FO UNIONS NOR DID THE THREE DAILIES IN MARSEILLE, INCLUDING "LE PROVENCAL" (OWNED BY SOCIALIST MAYOR GASTON DEFERRE) AND THE COMMUNIST "MARSEILLAISE". THE EXPLANATION GIVEN BY DEFERRE'S OFFICE WAS THAT THE MAJORITY OF THE "PROVENCAL" PRINTERS BELONG TO FORCE OUVRIERE WHICH OPPOSED THE CGT STRIKE. THE COMMUNIST "MARSEILLAISE" WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT SINCE THE TWO OTHER DAILIES WERE TO BE PRINTED THE "MARSEILLAISE" COULD NOT DEPRIVE THE WORKING CLASS OF MARSEILLE, AND ESPECIALLY THE UNEMPLOYED OF THEIR OWN NEWSPAPER.

5. "PARADOXICAL" WAS THE ADJECTIVE USED BY MOST COMMENTATORS TO DESCRIBE A STRIKE WHICH, ALTHOUGH INTENDED AGAINST "PARISIEN LIBERE", IN EFFECT BENEFITS THAT NEWSPAPER. HENCE THE QUESTION ASKED BY ALL OBSERVERS CONCERNS WHAT CGT MAY HAVE IN MIND IN CALLING AGAIN SUCH A STRIKE. THE GENERAL VIEW IS THAT THE CGT PRINTERS UNION, HAVING LOST OUT ON THE BASIC ISSUES WITH THE "PARISIEN LIBERE", FEELS THAT IT HAS NOTHING MORE TO LOSE BY PERPETUATING THE AGITATION IN THE HOPE THAT SOMETHING MAY GIVE. THE MOST THAT CGT CAN HOPE FOR AT THIS POINT IS NEGOTIATIONS WITH PUBLISHING INDUSTRY WHICH, ALTHOUGH WOULD RATIFY THE NEW SITUATION CONCERNING "PARISIEN LIBERE", WOULD ALLOW CGT TO REASSERT ITS ROLE AS PRINCIPAL INTERLOCUTOR IN THE PRINTING AND PUBLISHING BUSINESS AND THEREBY PROLONG THE MONOPOLY CONTROL IT HAS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 PARIS 21699 01 OF 02 221816Z

EXERCISED SINCE THE END OF THE WAR.

6. THE OTHER REASON WHICH CAN EXPLAIN THE CGT BEHAVIOR IN THIS INSTANCE IS THAT IT SERVES PCF STRATEGY AS IT SEEKS TO PROJECT THE IMAGE OF AN AGGRESSIVE, PURPOSEFUL AND SELF-CONFIDENT PARTY WHICH COMMANDS THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE WORKING CLASS AND WHICH IS PREPARED TO DO BATTLE ON ALL FRONTS AGAINST THE

BOURGEOIS STATUS QUO. IN THE DOLDRUMS OF AUGUST
AND WITH THE UNCERTAINTY OF HOW THE WORKING CLASS WILL
RESPOND TO APPEALS FOR ACTION IN THE FALL, THE PCF
COULD NOT OVERLOOK THE ONLY CAUSE AVAILABLE FOR
AGITATION, NAMELY THAT OF THE PRINTERS UNION FIGHTING

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PAGE 01 PARIS 21699 02 OF 02 221814Z

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AGAINST A POWERFUL PUBLISHING SYNDICATE CENTERED AROUND
"PARISIEN LIBERE."

7. AS WE HAVE REPORTED ALREADY, WHAT IS AT STAKE IS
NOTHING LESS THAN THE ENORMOUS LEVERAGE THE PCF-CGT
HAVE HELD SINCE THE WAR AGAINST THE PRESS THROUGH THE
CONTROL OF THE PRINTERS UNION. A DEMONSTRATION OF
HOW THIS LEVERAGE CAN BE EXERCISED WAS OFFERED WHEN
"PARIS-NORMANDIE" DID NOT APPEAR ON THE STANDS ON
20 AUGUST (THE DAY BEFORE THE GENERAL STRIKE) BECAUSE

THE EDITOR REFUSED TO PUBLISH A UNION COMMUNIQUE
ATTACKING IN UNACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE AMAURY, PRESIDENT OF
"PARISIEN LIBERE" AND BERGERON, SECRETARY GENERAL OF
FORCE OUVRIERE, WHOSE PRINTERS UNION ACCEPTED THE
RISK OF BREAKING THE CGT MONOPOLY. IN FAIRNESS IT
SHOULD BE SAID THAT THE CGT'S LEVERAGE AGAINST THE
PRESS HAS BEEN EXERCISED SO FAR ONLY ON TRADE UNION
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PAGE 02 PARIS 21699 02 OF 02 221814Z

MATTERS AND ESPECIALLY TO GIVE THE PRINTERS UNION
AN ADVANTAGE IN PRESENTING ITS CASE TO THE PUBLIC OR
PREVENTING ITS CRITICS FROM AIRING THEIR VIEWS.
COMMUNISTS KNOW HOW TO USE SPARINGLY THEIR TRUMP CARD.

8. WHILE THE PUBLIC CONTINUES TO REACT WITH GREAT
INDIFFERENCE TO THE ABSENCE OF NEWSPAPERS THE EDITORS
ARE BEGINNING TO SHOW IMPATIENCE AND IRRITATION. THE
EDITOR OF "LE MONDE" WROTE IN A SPECIAL EDITORIAL THAT
THE TIME HAS COME FOR THE PUBLISHERS TO THINK IN TERMS
OF MINIMUM EDITIONS TO OFFSET "THE PARADOXICAL" BE-
HAVIOR OF THE CGT PRINTERS. MEANWHILE GOF IS IGNORING
COMPLETELY THE SITUATION AND IN OUR OPINION WISELY SO.

9. WE HAVE YET TO SEE THE END OF IT ALL, NOR THE
END OF PCF-CGT RESOURCEFULNESS IN TRYING TO EXTRICATE
THEMSELVES FROM AN OBVIOUSLY UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATION.
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